

Research into the Current State of University Career Centers in Korea

Jaeho Chung, Yoojeong Nadine Seo, Youngmin Lee

Youth unemployment has become societal and economic issue internationally. In South Korea, the high rate of youth unemployment mainly arises from the high rate of enrollment to higher education. Therefore, enforcing the function and capacity of university career center can be an effective countermeasure against youth unemployment.

In this study, a survey was conducted(101 4-year universities, 80 2-year colleges) and the GOMS(Graduates Occupational Mobility Survey) 2012 data were analysed. In doing so, the current state of university career centers was looked into and ways to improve their current function and capacity were recommended.

The main results of the study are as follows.

Firstly, within a single university, the average number of careers service or related departments was 1.6-1.7 and 2/3 of the universities had only a single such department. The average number of teaching staff exclusive to employment-support was 7. More than half were with tenure and most of them belonged to their academic department.

Secondly, careers service center usually reported to the university headquarters or were under the headquarters. The number of exclusive staff were, on average, 5.8 in 4-year universities and 3.4 in 2-year colleges. Full-time employees were only 2.7 in 4-year universities and 1.7 in 2-year colleges. Prior experience of the exclusive staff were mostly below 5 years (universities 78.9%, colleges 64.7%). Their work was mostly administrative and only small proportion were

managing corporate-related work.

Thirdly, within the internal budget of administrative departments, the budget for careers services were 72.1% for 4-year universities and 53.9% for 2-year colleges. Within the external(governmental) budget, the figures were 20.3% and 34.0% each. Within the full budget of the universities, the proportion of careers services budget were only 1.475% for 4-year universities and 1.490% for 2-year colleges. The proportion was below 1% in more than 2/3 of the universities. The results show that, for careers services, only a small proportion of internal budget is allocated and universities rely heavily on external (governmental) funding.

Fourthly, careers service centers were running more than 70% of the special lectures and seminar, career counselling and job recommendations, setting-up and managing a new programme, supporting resume and personal statement writing and interview skills within the universities. Their major obstacle is the low participation rate of students and excessive administrative work.

Fifthly, 2/3 of the respondents were regularly monitoring their programmes and were taking the feedback into account when reviewing the programmes. 68.3% of the 4-year universities and 75.0% of the 2-year colleges were taking part in managing students' external work experiences and job-related practicals. In 4-year universities, careers services staff usually contacted or visited the partner corporates whereas, in 2-year colleges, it was usually the teaching staff. 62.4% of the 4-year universities and 78.8% of the 2-year colleges conducted post-hoc survey of the students following the work-experience programmes. Regarding the post-hoc survey of the corporate staff, the figures were 50.5% and 53.8% each.

Sixthly, careers service staff considered their programmes to be relatively effective for supporting graduate employment (3.72/5 for 4-year universities, 3.84/5 for 2-year colleges). They also considered the students who participated in the programmes had a increased level of satisfaction, engagement, motivation, competitiveness, organizational adaptability, work-related knowledge and work adaptability. For enforcement of university career service programmes, they asked that the government increase financial support for the universities and participating students and the corporates expand various employment opportunities.

Finally, amongst the careers services, the most utilized services were career-related psychometric tests and career-related curriculum. Even so, the rate was not over 50%. Yet, 2/3 of the participants considered the services to be helpful for their career decision and finding jobs. In other words, although the rate of participation was low, once participated, their satisfaction was high.

Based on the results, a number of practical implementations could be drawn as below.

Firstly, enforcement of manpower with appropriate competency and experiences is vital.

Secondly, high-quality and effective career programmes (e.g., work experience and employment camp) should be provided in order to encourage students' participation.

Thirdly, for the enforcement of manpower and high-quality programme, universities should expand their budget for careers service.

Finally, it is necessary to implement ways to encourage more students to utilize in the universities' careers service and programme.